



Seattle City Council Candidate Questionnaire on Housing and Homelessness, September 2019

Prepared By: [Resolution to End Homelessness](#), [Seattle University's Project on Family Homelessness](#) and [Tech 4 Housing](#),
in partnership with [Housing Development Consortium](#) and [Solid Ground](#)

Candidate's Name: Phil Tavel

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Candidate Photo: Attached or Permission to use photo from website

There are six questions. You may choose to skip a question; if so, please indicate that you choose not to answer. Please limit your answers to 150 words each (about 1,000 characters, including spaces).

Question 1. Beyond making current programs more efficient, do you think we need to increase funding for housing for people experiencing homelessness? If so, where would you raise the revenue?

We need more funding for permanent supportive housing. We also need a regional approach to our homelessness crisis. Since 2016, population trends have shown that about 50 percent of the homeless population comes from Seattle, 30 percent from other King County cities, and 15 percent from other Washington counties. Yet, Seattle has borne the cost of responding to a disproportionately large portion of the homeless population (around 70 percent). We need a unified, customer-centric regional system that manages outreach, services, and housing. Under a new, regional system, leadership could re-appropriate funds and find new housing dollars in the waste of other programs. If we boost our effectiveness, implement an efficient regional system, and build partnerships with the private sector and State and Federal resources, we can finally treat this as a crisis, get people stably housed, and avoid regressive funding mechanisms. Possibly avoiding any new taxes all together.



Question 2. What are your thoughts on the City's current implementation of encampment removals? In what ways would you improve the policies?

The City's current implementation of encampment removals is ineffective. There is a process to identify the six largest encampments and only those six are addressed each month. The circumstances that drive people into homelessness, homelessness itself, and the experiences people live through while homeless are traumatic. We need more of an emphasis on services and outreach expanded to a larger portion of the unsheltered population. Unfortunately, when the Mayor pushed for expansions to the Navigation Teams, certain Councilmembers fought against the expansion and reduced the planned additional funding. Helping those in need should not be a political battleground where elected officials go to demonize those who disagree with their approach. Using these outreach opportunities to connect more people with more services is critical to our success. We also must use customer input to shift how we communicate available services.

Question 3. The City and State have introduced several new tenant protections in recent years. Do you think more work is needed to protect tenants and combat displacement? If so, what changes would you like to see?

I do think more work is needed to protect tenants and combat displacement. I would like to see us to more to maintain current affordable housing stock instead of wholly relying on new development. Many of multifamily units in Seattle, especially in District One, are maintained by small landlords. Tenants in these units enjoy more affordable rents. However, when those landlords pass away or sell to new owners, rents increase rapidly or (in some cases) the new owners are developers and tear the whole thing down to build newer, smaller, and more expensive units. We should implement a program here modeled after San Francisco's Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA) and Washington D.C.'s Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA). These ordinances protect existing affordable housing stock, but more critically, do so in communities most vulnerable to displacement.



Question 4. Homelessness and housing insecurity disproportionately affect people of color, LGBTQ communities, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities. What would you do to address these disparities?

I believe the best way to address the disproportionality of the effects of homelessness and housing insecurity is through targeted outreach, collaborative policy building, and targeted funding following from these. There is no blanket policy that can solve this problem for all marginalized groups. However, by working with and within the communities in which we see these disparities, we can address the causes. Studies have tied racial disparities to racial wealth gaps and housing discrimination, LGBTQ disparities to unsafe family and social environments and housing discrimination, and disability disparities to employment, health care, and housing barriers. By focusing our policies and investments to benefit these and other marginalized communities, we can address the disparities that exist in our society. Specific improvements include; housing bonds, data collection and analysis, credit score accommodations, allowing for alternative documentation for accessing housing and services.

Question 5. How would you adjust Seattle's land use and zoning laws? In particular, what changes, if any, would you want to see in neighborhoods currently zoned exclusively for single-family housing and in multi-family neighborhoods where we're making significant investments in transit?

I will work to strike a balance between new development and maintain our affordable housing stock, including reviewing City owned properties and upper floors in commercial zones to find a variety of options. It's imperative to consider how housing can and should fit into existing neighborhoods. Currently, even with upzoning and other zoning changes, there is no process in place to solve the issue of population density without making our neighborhoods unaffordable. This is why I have proposed amendments to the in-lieu-of fee plan that ensure developers either build affordable units in upzoned areas or pay enough money to build affordable units on the public side. Creative changes to our land use and zoning laws that follow from thorough community engagement in conjunction with stronger protections and guarantees for affordable units are critical as we plan for growth – especially considering planned transportation investments.



Question 6. We know that it is cheaper to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place than it is to support them to exit homelessness. What is your vision for homelessness prevention initiatives and services in our community?

We will properly address the homelessness crisis if we address the root causes. Homelessness is extreme poverty. Poverty extends beyond housing. This is evidenced by the self-reported causes of homelessness during King County's point-in-time counts. Job loss, substance abuse, and eviction are the three most frequent causes reported. Separation from partner and mental and physical health issues are also frequent causes. We must work together as a region to improve employment programs, substance abuse and mental and physical health issues, and tenant protections. Getting people housing is an effective approach in getting people shelter, but it cannot be housing alone. If it was as simple as getting people housing, we could ignore other areas and focus on building housing. Poverty and homelessness are extraordinarily complex – they require a broad network of various services, including housing, which effectively and proactively reaching out to improve our communities.

Candidate Signature for verification (electronic is ok):

Date: Thursday, September 5, 2019

- END OF QUESTIONNAIRE -

Please return to: hinrichc@seattleu.edu, cc [laceym@seattleu.edu](mailto:lacey@seattleu.edu), by 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4, 2019. Thank you for participating.

Distributed to all 2019 Seattle City Council general election candidates on behalf of partners Resolution to End Homelessness, Seattle University's Project on Family Homelessness, Tech 4 Housing, Housing Development Consortium and Solid Ground, by SU's Project on Family Homelessness, Institute of Public Service, Seattle University/CASY 210, P.O. Box 222000, Seattle, WA, 98122-1090, on Sept. 4, 2019.

Housing Voter logo by Anneke Karreman, SU '20.